

Furman Magazine

Volume 55
Issue 3 Fall 2012

Article 21

9-1-2012

Hard-nosed Henning boasts virtuoso's flair

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Recommended Citation

Moore, Vince (2012) "Hard-nosed Henning boasts virtuoso's flair," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 55 : Iss. 3 , Article 21.
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol55/iss3/21>

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Hard-nosed Henning boasts virtuoso's flair

IN HIS 18 SEASONS as men's soccer coach at Furman, Doug Allison has seen some pretty good players come through his program. There have been 29 All-Americans, seven Southern Conference players of the year, eight Paladins selected in the Major League Soccer draft, and two — Ricardo Clark '05 and Clint Dempsey '05 — who have played with the U.S. National Team in the World Cup.

But to know what the quintessential Furman soccer player is like, look no further than senior midfielder/forward Coleton Henning — especially after a game.

"His sleeves will be rolled up, his jersey dirty and wrinkled, his fists clinched," Allison says of Henning. "He's a blue collar, hard-working player who epitomizes the way we want to play."

But Henning does more than just play hard. Allison says every team has its piano movers and its piano players, but Henning is one of those rare players who can do the heavy lifting and then become a virtuoso when it's time to perform.

"Coleton has great ball skills and a real ability to score," Allison says. "He has had some fantastic goals for us that we are going to remember for a long time."

One of them came in the Paladins' 2-0 victory over Pac-12 member Stanford in September. Henning scored both goals, the first on a 20-yard blast that Allison called "sublime."

"You could see that it shook the Stanford players and coaches to give up that goal," Allison says. "They weren't the same team after that."

The Paladin soccer program has returned to national prominence, and Henning has been a big part of the resurgence. He was named Southern Conference Freshman of the Year in 2008 and Player of the Year in 2011 after leading Furman to a 14-4-4 record and a spot in the NCAA tournament. He was all-conference again this season and tied for the team lead with eight goals as the Paladins compiled a 12-4-3 mark.

But while Allison admires Henning's ability to play the piano, it is his willingness to move it that Allison seems to appreciate most of all. Henning has the ability and flexibility to wait patiently for the action to arrive in his third of the field, but he gladly moves to the midfield when needed and challenges every 50-50 ball as if his life depended on winning it.

"That's the only way I know how to play," Henning says. "That's how I was raised. The harder you work, the more it pays off."

Henning's success may be even more remarkable considering that he suffered his third knee injury just before his junior year in 2010 and had to sit out the season. Allison says it's hard to come back from one knee injury, much less three, and he has seen many players who didn't return at the same level.

"Sometimes they lose a step, and they're afraid to make the same kind of challenge on the ball," Allison says. "But, if anything, Coleton came back stronger, even less afraid. To come back from an injury like that and be the SoCon Player of the Year was quite a feat."



Henning, who is from Shawnee, Kan., is set to graduate in December with a degree in sociology. He would like to play professionally, either in the United States or overseas, but for now he is pleased that the Paladin program is approaching the glory it enjoyed a decade ago, when Clark and Dempsey were wearing the uniform.

"It was a great decision for me to come here," he says. "We are performing well right now on the national scene, and I'm very proud to be a part of that."

— VINCE MOORE

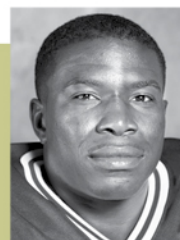
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The record book

With 239 yards in Furman's 45-24 victory over Western Carolina September 29, running back Jerodis Williams '13 racked up the fourth highest single-game rushing total in Furman history. His 89-yard run for a touchdown in the second quarter was the second longest rushing play in school history, falling just short of the 93-yard run by Russ Sutton '54 against Presbyterian in 1951.

What three Furman student athletes have rushed for more yards in one game than Jerodis Williams?



a.
33 carries, 301 yards
vs. Georgia Southern,
2000



b.
18 carries, 261 yards
vs. Presbyterian, 1980



c.
26 carries, 243 yards
vs. South Carolina
State, 1996